

## CATHOLIC WORLD LAST WEEK

(CWLW)

12-18 Sep 2022

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### **Vatican, Beijing negotiating renewal of secret accord**

(12-9-22) A team of Vatican negotiations, led by Archbishop Claudio Maria Celli, was in China last week to negotiate the renewal of a secret accord governing the selection of bishops for the Church in China.

Ironically the negotiations took place in Tianjin: a city that has been without a bishop recognized by the Chinese government since 2005. Bishop Melchior Shi, who is 93 years old, heads the “underground” Church, and is recognized by the Holy See, but has been living under house arrest. The Vatican’s secret agreement with Beijing, signed in 2018 and renewed in 2020, is due for renewal soon. Chinese officials are likely aiming to settle a new agreement before the 20th Congress of the Community Party, which takes place in October.

Although Vatican officials have justified the agreement as a means of ensuring proper leadership for the Church in China, roughly one-third of China’s dioceses do not currently have a bishop.

### **German Church leaders approve permanent Synod council**

(12-9-22) The German bishops’ Synodal Path initiative concluded a three-day meeting with a vote to form a permanent council, composed of lay people as well as bishops, to guide the German Church. After rejecting one major statement that would have endorsed changes in the Church teaching on sexuality, the assembly voted in favour other statements that: Called an end to “taboos” and an open attitude toward “non-heterosexual priests;” Pushed for reconsideration of women’s ordination, saying that “it should no longer be gender that decides on the allocation of ministries;” Recommended changes in church employment policies, so that they will not be “discriminatory with regard to employees who live contrary to the traditional sexual morals of the Church;” and Urged “a re-evaluation of homosexuality in the Magisterium.”

Although the Vatican has cautioned that the Synodal Path has no authority to change Church teaching or discipline, the meeting gave the new council power to “take fundamental decisions of supra-diocesan significance” on issues that are not controlled by the individual dioceses.

### **‘Share a living experience of the faith,’ Pope tells catechists**

(12-9-22) On September 10, Pope Francis delivered an address to participants in the Third International Congress of Catechists.

“Catechesis cannot be like an hour at school, but rather a living experience of the faith that each one of us feels the desire to transmit to the new generations,” Pope Francis said. “Only the interpersonal encounter opens the heart to receive the first proclamation and to desire to grow in the Christian life with the proper dynamism that catechesis allows.”

### **Papal address to Pontifical Academy: ‘Science is a tool for peace’**

(12-9-22) On September 10, Pope Francis delivered an address to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Established in 1936, it is an advisory body whose members include non-Catholics.

During his address, the Pope warned that “unfortunately, history shows signs of regression. Not only are anachronistic conflicts intensifying, but instances of a myopic, extremist, resentful and aggressive nationalism are re-emerging.”

“The many ongoing armed conflicts are of serious concern,” he continued. “I have said that it was a third world war being fought ‘piecemeal’ – perhaps we can now say that it is ‘all out’ – putting people and the planet at ever greater risk.”



## **New papal message for 2023 World Youth Day**

(12-9-22) Pope Francis has issued a 3rd message in preparation for the World Youth Day that will be held in Lisbon in 2023.

The papal message, encourages young people to “go in haste,” as Mary went to her cousin Elizabeth, to spread the message of salvation. Pope Francis notes the important difference between haste to help others and haste “which can drive us to live superficially and take everything lightly.”

World Youth Day was scheduled for 2022, but was postponed to 2023—to take place August 1-6—because of the covid lockdown.

## **Italian archbishop to oversee Vatican’s diplomatic personnel**

(12-9-22) Pope Francis has named Archbishop Luciano Russo as the Secretary of Pontifical Representations.

The Vatican’s Secretariat of State has three sections: the Section for General Affairs, under the direction of the Substitute; the Section for Relations with States and International Organizations; and the Section for Diplomatic Personnel of the Holy See, under the direction of the Secretary for Pontifical Representations, assisted by an Undersecretary.

“The Section for Diplomatic Personnel of the Holy See deals with questions concerning persons who serve in the diplomatic service of the Holy See, and in particular their living and working conditions and their ongoing formation,” according to Praedicate Evangelium, the Pope’s apostolic constitution on the Roman Curia.

Archbishop Russo was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Averso, Italy, in 1988. He has served as apostolic nuncio to Rwanda (2012-16), Algeria and Tunisia (2016-20), Panama (2020-21), and Uruguay (2021-22). Archbishop Russo, 59, succeeds Archbishop Jan Romeo Pawlowski, 61, who has not been given a new position.

## **Papal plane to avoid flight over Russia, Ukraine on journey to Kazakhstan**

(12-9-22) During his apostolic journey to Kazakhstan, which begins on September 13, Pope Francis will go out of his way to avoid flying over Russian and Ukrainian airspace. Instead, he will fly over Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.



## **Italy - Comboni Missionaries, 150 years of mission: an exhibition looking at the General Chapter**

(12-9-22) The 150th anniversary of the foundation by Daniele Comboni of the Comboni Missionaries, will be commemorated on September 14 at the Mother House, in Verona, with the inauguration of the exhibition "A promise that continues", in view of a larger project for the enhancement of cultural heritage of the Congregation. In fact, the transfer (from Rome to Verona) of the Historical Archive of the Congregation and the reorganization of the permanent exhibition of the objects of

the Museum of the Comboni Missionary Sisters will soon take place, which, thanks to a new arrangement, will be located in some of the most significant spaces of the Mother House and, through the use of multimedia technologies, it will allow to tell the lived experience of the missionary experience and show its continuous evolution.

Today there are 1,017 Comboni missionaries in the world belonging to 34 nations (608 European, 248 African, 157 American, 4 Asian), though the average age is 70 years. The XXI Chapter General will be held at the Mother House from October 1 to 26.

## **Italy - The heart of the mission ad gentes: to deepen the phenomenon of migration by moving from “for” to “with”**

(12-9-22) The phenomenon of migration, in preparation for the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, which will be celebrated on September 25, 2022, was at the centre of the meetings for formation and animation of the Sector of the General Missions of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA), for the representatives of the provinces of the missions ad gentes and missionaries ad gentes throughout the world.

"Sister Ruth del Mora Pilar, General Councilor for the Missions, and her collaborators have chosen, from the first meetings of the Sector of this sexennium, to interact in a synodal way with the involvement of the sisters and young lay people engaged in the missionary animation of the different provinces and to get as close as possible to the concrete realities of the different parts of the world", explained Sister Anna Maria Geuna, collaborator of the General Mission Sector of the FMA. The passage from 'for' to 'with' in society, (underlined by the Pope in his WYD 2022 message), as in the Church, in our educational communities, is the heart of our mission ad gentes and of the synodal journey that we follow."

### **Indian Catholics form human chain against Kerala port**

(12-9-22) Catholics in the southern Indian state of Kerala formed a 17-kilometer-long human chain to support an ongoing fishermen's protest against a multi-billion dollar Vizhinjam port project.

The human chain along the Chellanam-Fort Kochi coastal corridor on Sept. 10 was a show of solidarity against the project, which is a "man-made disaster," said Father Jacob G Palakkappilly, spokesman of the Kerala Catholic Bishop's Council (KCBC).

Thousands of fishermen and their families including women and children have been protesting since July 20 demanding an immediate halt to work at the site of the Adani port at Vizhinjam, close to the state capital Thiruvananthapuram. The Latin Archdiocese of Trivandrum is spearheading the protest as a majority of the fishermen are Catholics and members of the archdiocese.

### **Vietnam's first native female order marks 350 years**

(12-9-22) Nuns from Vietnam's first native female religious congregation founded by a French missionary bishop have marked their 350th anniversary with a gathering in Thailand to contemplate their origins, charisms, and growth.

The Lovers of the Holy Cross (LHC) nuns gathered from all over Thailand and other Asian countries at St. Joseph's Church in Ayutthaya, a historic city north of the Thai capital Bangkok, on Sept. 3 to celebrate the jubilee. The Vatican's Congregation for the Propagation of Faith recognized the congregation on Aug. 28, 1678.

The jubilee gathering was themed "Looking at the past with gratitude, live today with enthusiasm, going into the future with hope, and walking together in faith and love."



### **Plan to end Sikh-Christian 'conversion' rift in India**

(12-9-22) Representatives of different faiths in New Delhi have begun work to establish peace between Christian and Sikh minorities at loggerheads in Punjab over religious conversions.

The growing number of churches and churchgoers in the Sikh-majority state in north India has led to sporadic friction with Sikh religious organizations who accuse Christians of using forceful and fraudulent means of conversion.

A C Michael, convener of the Concerned Citizens Group in New Delhi said in a press note issued on Aug. 12 that the group at its recent meeting decided to meet Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, who is also the founder and leader of the Aam Adami Party (AAP) that rules Punjab. The interreligious group "feels that the good offices of Mr. Kejriwal could play an important role in bringing about a much-needed peaceful atmosphere between two clashing groups as Mr. Kejriwal enjoys the goodwill of both communities," Michael said.

AAP's Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had called the latest attack on a church "unfortunate" and assured he will not allow anybody to disturb the communal harmony in the state. In the attack on Aug. 31, masked men had vandalized a church in Tarn Taran district, on the border with Pakistan, and set the pastor's car on fire.

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### **Pope arrives in Kazakhstan**

(13-9-22) Pope Francis arrived in Kazakhstan on 13 September touching down at the Nur-Sultan Nazarbayev airport to begin a three-day visit.

President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev led a delegation greeting the Pontiff at an airport ceremony, after which the Pope made a courtesy call at the presidential palace.

On 14 September morning the Pope is to attend the opening

session of the VII Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. He is to celebrate Mass for the country's small Catholic community that afternoon, then participate in the closing session of the inter-faith meeting on 15 September before returning to Rome. Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill is not attending the meeting.

### **Pope to entrepreneurs: 'Share economic gains with philanthropy, fair taxation, job creation'**

(13-9-22) "In reality, one can be a merchant, an entrepreneur, and be a follower of Christ, an inhabitant of his Kingdom," Pope Francis said on September 12, in an address to participants in a conference of the General Confederation of Italian Industry (Confindustria). "The question then becomes: what are the conditions for an entrepreneur to enter the Kingdom of Heaven?"

### **'Education should always seek the truth,' Pope tells Swiss students**

(13-9-22) "Jesus Christ is the greatest educator in history: by the love of the Father and the action of the Holy Spirit, He brings us into being 'from above,' as He told Nicodemus," Pope Francis said on September 12, in an address to members of the Swiss Student Society. "He frees us from the bondage of the self and opens us to the fullness of life in communion with God, with others, with creatures, and even with ourselves."

### **Pope: 'always ready' for visit to China**

(13-9-22) "I'm always ready to go to China," Pope Francis told reporters who accompanied him on his September 13 flight to Kazakhstan.

The Pope made the comment in response to questions about the possibility that he might meet Chinese President Xi Jinping, who is also in Kazakhstan this week. He said that he was not aware of any plans to arrange such a meeting.

### **Eritrean troops disrupt Mass, force teenagers in attendance to enter military**

(13-9-22) The East African nation of 6 million has been a repressive one-party state since it gained independence in 1993. The disruption of Mass took place in Akrur, a village in the Eritrean Catholic Eparchy of Segheneity.

### **Ukrainian bishops back UN reports of citizens deported to Russia**

(13-9-22) "Although we don't know precisely where people are being sent, or on what scale, these deportations are certainly happening," said Bishop Stanislav Szyrokoradiuk of Odesa-Simferopol. "It's just one of many human rights violations we are witnessing."

### **European bishops declare day of prayer for peace in Ukraine**



(13-9-22) The Council of the Bishops' Conferences of Europe has announced "Eucharistic adoration in every church of Europe" on September 14, to pray for peace in Ukraine.

"Pastors and faithful, will gather together on their knees in front of the Blessed Sacrament to pray that the Lord will grant peace to Ukraine, taking up the very appeal of Pope Francis who called for each person to "be a builder of peace and to pray that thoughts and plans of concord and reconciliation will spread in the world," according to the announcement.

### **Pakistan - Prayer and solidarity: mobilization of the Catholic community to help families affected by the floods in Sindh**

(13-9-22) "The people affected by the heavy rains in the province of Sindh find themselves in a terrible situation: many live in the open air, without food to eat, without homes, without a kitchen and without sanitary facilities. For the moment, they can only wait for help from institutions and people of goodwill. The floods have destroyed their homes and crops and hundreds of animals have drowned. Now there are also medical problems. People are lying on the streets and waiting for help: our response is made of prayer, human closeness and solidarity", says to Fides Sister Elizabeth Niamat FC, who led the 20-strong delegation of St. Joseph's Convent School in Karachi to provide humanitarian aid to families affected by the floods which in the past two months have covered a third of Pakistani territory and affected 33 million people.



### **Myanmar - Troops occupy, vandalize Catholic church**

(13-9-22) Myanmar army troops occupied a parish church in the little town of Moebye from September 8 to 12, destroying statues and hiding anti-personnel mines in the building before they left.

A parish priest told the Fides news service, "The soldiers chose the church as their base because they knew that the young people would not attack them—that is, out of opportunism and to save themselves."

### **Cuba - bishops troubled by proposed 'Family Code'**

(13-9-22) The Catholic bishops of Cuba have encouraged their people to vote according to their consciences on a proposed Family Code, which will go into effect if approved in a September 25 vote. The bishops observed that the new code, which would replace a 1975 law, has some positive elements, such as protection for the rights of grandparents and the elderly.

However the proposed code would introduce gender theory, allow for same-sex adoption, and support assisted reproduction—elements which, the bishops remarked, would "not benefit the Cuban family."

### **Chinese Christian charities raise funds online**

(13-9-22) Christian charities have raised funds for their projects to assist disadvantaged people, especially the sick and disabled people, by encouraging people to donate during the annual philanthropy campaign.

The charities received funds during Tencent's 99 Giving Day, the largest online fundraising campaign, which ran from Sept. 1—10 this year, *China Christian Daily* reported on Sept. 13.

Ji'nan Faith, Hope & Love Disability Service Centre in Shandong Province of northeast China, Elim Home in Xuchang City, in China's northern Henan Province, "Love My Neighbor" Community Service & Development Centre in Beijing, Shanghai Agape Foundation, the National Council of Young Women's Christian Associations (YWCA's), the National Council of Young Men's Christian Associations (YMCA's), the Fujian Suixin Public Service Center in Xiamen, Fujian province, Renai Marriage and Family Service Center in central China's Anhui Province, Amity Home of Blessings in Nanjing of Jiangsu province, Ark Caring Home and The Beatitudes Foundation in Hainan Province of southern China are among the charitable institutions in China that assist autistic adults, offer services for orphans and children of the prisoners, provide beds, meals, and spiritual companionship

for families who come to the Chinese capital city for medical treatment of their seriously ill children and help the needy including the elderly, support treatment of children with clubfoot, and help cancer patients etc.

### **Indonesian Church urged to tackle sexual abuse head-on**

(13-9-22) A forum of priests, nuns, laypeople, and activists in Indonesia has urged the Catholic Church hierarchy to tackle sexual abuse head-on and to end the practice of cover-up for the sake of protecting the church's image.

The online discussion was held in collaboration between Let's Talk About Sex and Sexualities, and Yayasan Sesawi dan Kawal Gereja (Mustard and Church Watchdog Foundation), a lay Catholic group, on Sept. 9.

The organizers said the event sought to encourage Church leaders to be serious and proactive in investigating sexual violence within the church, in line with Pope Francis' commitment to zero tolerance for sex abuse. It was mentioned that the Indonesian Church was only at the stage of "starting to become aware" of this problem, in contrast to countries in Europe and America, as it has begun to take serious steps to tackle sexual abuse in recent years.

### **Sri Lankan Church seeks wider probe into Easter bombings**



(13-9-22) Church officials and rights activists in Sri Lanka have sought to form a wider international team of independent experts and investigators to probe the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings, suspecting a cover-up in the move to seek assistance from Scotland Yard police. Acting President Ranil Wickremesinghe at a recent meeting with USAID Administrator Samantha Power reportedly disclosed that Scotland Yard has been requested to review the reports on the investigations and if there was a hidden hand in the bombings. Father Rohan Silva, Oblate priest, and rights activist demanded that investigators involved with the Easter attack probe transferred by

former president Gotabaya Rajapaksha should be brought back and a "hybrid" team should be formed with foreign sleuths to reveal the truth.

### **Church leaders seek harsh sentence for Papua killings**

(13-9-22) Church leaders in Indonesia's Papua region have called for tough punishments for six military soldiers accused of killing and mutilating four indigenous people in the restive Christian-majority province last month.

The Papua Commission of the interdenominational group, the Communion of Churches in Indonesia (PGI), held a press conference on Sept. 12 to demand a fair probe and harsh sentences for the gruesome murders.

### **China targets religion on radio, TV and internet**

(13-9-22) Communist China is moving ahead to adopt a new regulation for radio, television, and online programs that strictly bans among other things all forms of dissent and unauthorized religious content that threatens to disrupt "social order" and negate "socialist culture," says a Sept.9 report by *Bitter Winter*.

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### **Pope in Kazakhstan: Religions 'key to building world peace and understanding'**

(14-9-22) On September 14, the second day of the Pope's apostolic journey to Kazakhstan (map), Pope Francis took part in the opening session of the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions.

In his wide-ranging address, the Pope discussed challenges related to the pandemic, peace, fraternal

acceptance, and care for our common home.

“May the Almighty...enable us to cultivate open and fraternal friendships through frequent dialogue and luminous sincerity of purpose,” Pope Francis concluded. “May we never aim at artificial and conciliatory forms of syncretism, but firmly maintain our own identities, open to the courage of otherness and to fraternal encounter. Only in this way, in these dark times in which we live, will we be able to radiate the light of our Creator.”

### **At Mass in Kazakhstan, Pope urges faithful to look toward Cross**

(14-9-22) Celebrating Mass in Kazakhstan on September 14, the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, Pope Francis preached on the reading from the Book of Numbers, about “the serpents that bite” and “a serpent that saves.”

The Pope said that the people of Kazakhstan have experience with the serpents that bite, alluding to years of violent persecution and Communist tyranny. But he encouraged them to remember the bronze serpent that Moses raised up, as a type of the Crucified Christ.



### **Russian metropolitan blames Vatican for cancellation of Pope-Patriarch summit**

(14-9-22) Metropolitan Anthony Sevryuk of Volokolamsk told journalists that the Vatican called off plans for a meeting between Pope Francis and Russian Orthodox Patriarch Kirill, but voiced hope for a future summit.

The Russian prelate spoke to reporters in Kazakhstan, where he said that he had a “very cordial” talk with Pope Francis at the inter-faith conference this week. He said that a future summit meeting between the Pope and the Russian Patriarch “must be well prepared.”

Metropolitan Anthony also criticized the Pope’s remark that Patriarch Kirill should not become an “altar boy” for the Russian government. That remark was “not useful for Christian unity,” he said.

### **‘Harmonize with your past and present,’ Pope tells Kazakhstan’s civil authorities**

(14-9-22) On September 13, the first day of his three-day apostolic journey to Kazakhstan, Pope Francis paid tribute to the history of the nation and praised the “country of encounter” for contemporary actions.

“I wish to express appreciation for the affirmation of the value of human life embodied by the abolition of the death penalty in the name of each human being’s right to hope,” he said in his address. “I express deep appreciation for this country’s decisive repudiation of nuclear weapons and its efforts to develop energy and environmental policies centred on decreased dependence on carbon fuel and on investment in clean sources of energy.”

The Pope also encouraged the country to take further steps toward democracy. “The defence of freedom, an aspiration inscribed in the heart of each person, the sole condition for an authentic encounter between individuals and groups, is expressed in civil society chiefly by the recognition of rights, accompanied by duties,” he said.

### **Cardinal Hollerich questions Cardinal Zen’s perspective on China (Bree Dail)**

(14-9-22) Cardinal Jean-Claude Hollerich of Luxembourg has said that Cardinal Joseph Zen is “controversial in mainland China,” and suggested that the outspoken Chinese cardinal may be making life more difficult for members of the “underground” Church.

### **After Ethiopian Cardinal’s call for dialogue, Tigray forces agree to peace talks**

(14-9-22) Ethiopian troops are fighting against a separatist coalition in the Tigray War, which began in 2020.

“Dear brothers and sisters, our country is in an internal war,” said Cardinal Berhaneyesus Souraphiel of Addis Ababa, the head of the Eastern-rite Ethiopian Catholic Church. “Our Church implores all parties to give space for peace and reconciliation, to sit down for dialogue to save our country and people from destruction, for war is destructive, and nobody benefits from it.” Following the Ethiopian Cardinal’s call for dialogue and ceasefire after years of violence in the country’s Tigray region, members of the Tigrayan forces have said they are willing to engage in peace talks to be mediated by the African Union (AU).

### **Holy See, Kazakhstan sign new diplomatic accord**

(14-9-22) The Holy See has reached a new diplomatic accord with the Republic of Kazakhstan, governing the reception of Church workers from other countries who travel to Kazakhstan to engage in pastoral work with that country’s Catholics.

The agreement was signed by Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Vatican’s Secretary for Relations with States, who is in Kazakhstan this week accompanying Pope Francis on his visit.

### **Bomb threats force closure of 2 Catholic high schools in Canada**

(14-9-22) The schools (St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in London, and St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Secondary School in St. Thomas) are both located in Ontario province.

### **Chinese government spokeswoman praises Pope’s ‘friendship and good will’**

(14-9-22) On September 14, Mao Ning, the deputy director of China’s Foreign Ministry Information Department, was asked, “Pope Francis of the Roman Catholic Church said yesterday when he arrived in Kazakhstan that he was willing to go to China at any time. Does China consider having talks with the Pope?”

She replied, “I have also noted relevant reports and appreciate the friendship and goodwill conveyed by Pope Francis. China and the Vatican maintain good communication. We are also ready to keep our dialogue and cooperation with the Vatican going and actively advance the process of improving relations.”



### **Mozambique - The Bishop of Pemba: "In order to stop Jihadists, we must give young people a future"**

(14-9-22) "There cannot be first class and second class victims". "The response to jihadists cannot be solely military but it is necessary to give hope to young people who would otherwise be tempted to recruit into jihadist ranks". These are some of the statements released by Bishop Juliasso Ferreira Sandramo of Pemba, a diocese located in Cabo Delgado, the northern province of Mozambique destabilized for several years by rebels who have joined the Islamic State.

The jihadist insurgency has recently spread to the neighboring province of Nampula, where during the assault on the Chipene mission on the evening of September 6, Sister Maria De Coppi, among others, was killed.

Bishop Sandramo, who is visiting Portugal, explained that since the start of the war in Ukraine, the lack of support from the World Food Program (WFP) is felt in Cabo Delgado. So far, the Bishop underlines, WFP has done an extraordinary job, bringing humanitarian aid to areas that are in urgent need, achieving an exceptional result: no deaths due to starvation among those displaced by violence. The end of aid, however, puts more than 850,000 displaced people at risk, says the Bishop of Pemba, pointing out that 8,000 new displaced people have been added following the latest attacks.

### **Pakistan - The Supreme Court: more attention to blasphemy cases, to protect the innocent and guarantee a fair trial**



(14-9-22) "We welcome the decision of the Supreme Court of Pakistan which asks the Government to be more careful in dealing with blasphemy cases. We recall the misuse of blasphemy laws in the last two decades. This is a serious concern for Christians, Hindus and other religious minorities in Pakistan. It is very important that police and government officials handle cases of blasphemy with great care, so that no innocent person is incriminated", said Sabir Michael, a Catholic involved in civil society, to Fides, commenting on the recent Supreme Court ruling in Pakistan which ordered the state to be very diligent in dealing with cases of blasphemy.

In the detailed decision issued in early September the supreme body of the Pakistani judiciary expressly asks state officials to exercise "the utmost caution" and acknowledges the problems and exploitation of this legislation.

The judgment notes that "the defendant's fundamental right to a fair trial must be guaranteed", noting that "there have been cases where an angry mob injured or even killed a defendant before he was found guilty". The text also recalls that preaching Christianity is not a crime in Pakistan, but "it is a fundamental right of every citizen to profess, practice and propagate his religion".

### **Kazakhstan - Where there is God, there is hope: Russian pilgrims in KarLag**

(14-9-22) "Even in the most dramatic circumstances, God gives people hope. Where there is God, there is peace and unity and we are called to seek this unity and this peace above all in our hearts". Thus Bishop Nikolaj Dubinin, Auxiliary for the Archdiocese of the Mother of God in Moscow, spoke during the homily of the Mass which he presided at the end of the second day of pilgrimage for the 78 Catholics who traveled from Russia to Kazakhstan on the occasion of Pope Francis' apostolic journey. The celebration took place on 13 Sept. in the Catholic Cathedral of Our Lady of Fatima, following the group's visit to KarLag, an acronym for the Stalinist concentration camp system of Karaganda. "We should not expect anything from others" - continued the Bishop, "but we are called to bring unity and peace to others."

### **Kazakhstan - Pope Francis to religious Leaders: let's remind everyone that we are creatures, for the good of the world**

(14-9-22) The different religious traditions remind us that "we are not omnipotent". Faced with the "mystery of the infinite which dominates us and which attracts us", they "remind us that we are creatures", men and women journeying "towards the same heavenly goal", united by a common bond of real fraternity "as children of the same Heaven ". So said Pope Francis, at the start of his much-anticipated address to the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which began after a silent prayer on September 14 Wednesday morning in Nur-Sultan, capital of Kazakhstan. Seated next to eighty-one representatives of different faiths from fifty countries, gathered around the table in the large circular hall in the Palace of Independence, the Pope underlined the recognition of creaturality, a focal point of authentic religious sense, as the source of the precious and unique contribution that the different communities of believers can offer together for the benefit of the entire human family.

The Pontiff's long speech was strewn with suggestive quotes from Abai (1845-1904), Kazakhstan's most famous poet, who expressed in his writings a "harmonious wisdom, which desires peace and research by questioning himself with humility". Witness, like the "wandering shepherd of Asia" in the poem by Giacomo Leopardi (also quoted by Pope Francis - of the "thirst for the infinite that dwells in the heart of every man". A thirst from which spring questions that sweep away narrow visions and petty calculations, and which helps us to remember - the Pope added "that we human beings do not exist so much to satisfy earthly interests or to weave purely economic relationships, as to walk together, as wayfarers, with our eyes raised to the heavens".

From believers and above all from the heads of communities of faith - the Pope continued - the world "expects us to be examples of souls alive and minds clear, it looks to us for an authentic religiosity".



For this reason - the Pontiff remarked - "it is time to realize that the fundamentalism defiles and corrupts every creed". And it is also time to "consign to the history books the kind of talk that for all too long, here and elsewhere, has led to distrust and contempt for religion, as if it were a destabilizing force in modern society". The Pope, referring to the history of Kazakhstan in the years of the Soviet Union, referred to the legacy of state atheism, to recall that "religion is not a problem, but part of the solution for a more harmonious life in society". The Pontiff spoke of religious freedom as an "essential condition" for genuinely human and integral development..

In the present time - continued the Bishop of Rome in the second part of his speech - the communities of believers and leaders are called to face four global challenges: the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which made us realize that no one is completely self-sufficient: The task of believers - the Pope remarked - is also "to help our brothers and sisters at the present time not to forget our vulnerability: not to fall into illusions of omnipotence fostered by a technological and economic progress that is of itself insufficient". Faced with the conflicts and wars that are tearing the world apart - the Pontiff continued - believers and religious leaders are also called to face the global challenge of repeating to the world that "God is peace and always leads to peace, never to war", and to ensure that "the Almighty will never again be held hostage to the human thirst for power". The sacred - the Pontiff remarked - "must never be a prop for power, nor power a prop for the sacred!". Conflicts must be resolved "not by the inconclusive means of power, with arms and threats, but by the only means blessed by heaven and worthy of man: encounter, dialogue and patient negotiations.

The feeling of being creatures united by the bond of fraternity - the Pontiff added in the concluding part of his speech - must guide communities of faith to face together also the global challenges of welcoming and safeguarding creation, our common home. "Let us not aim - concluded Pope Francis, at artificial and conciliatory forms of syncretism, but instead firmly maintain our own identities, open to the courage of otherness and to fraternal encounter. Only in this way, along this path, in these dark times in which we live, will we be able to radiate the light of our Creator".

### **Bolivia - Amazon: Gold mining alters the environment and pollutes, with devastating effects on human and animal health**

(14-9-22) The rejection of mining in all its forms and the blocking of the import of mercury due to the serious damage it causes to the environment and health were some of the conclusions of the "Second Forum on Gold Mining in the Bolivian Amazon", organized by Caritas - Social Pastoral of the Apostolic Vicariate of Reyes (PSCR) in the city of Rurrenabaque, Beni, on September 9 and 10. The objective was to promote exchanges between institutions, networks and organizations, with a view to reflection and subsequent action on the environmental and public health problems arising from gold mining in the Bolivian Amazon.



### **HK Catholics mark silver jubilee of permanent diaconate**

(14-9-22) Catholics in Hong Kong have marked the 25th anniversary of having permanent deacons in the diocese. During the celebration, Father Dominic Chan Chi-Ming, chairman of the Diocesan Commission for the Permanent Diaconate in Hong Kong Diocese said permanent deacons have greater acceptance among the clergy, religious, and laypeople. The priest made the remarks during a Mass to mark the anniversary on Aug. 28, the diocesan newspaper *Sunday Examiner* reported on Sept. 9.

Some 23 permanent deacons currently serving in the diocese attended the concelebrated Mass at the Cathedral of Immaculate Conception. Cardinal John Baptist Wu of Hong Kong introduced the ministry when most Catholics did not know the role of permanent deacons.

### **Korean archbishop calls for equality, consensus in education**

(14-9-22) Archbishop Peter Chung Soon-taek of Seoul has urged South Korean President Yoon Seok-yeol to create a national consensus in formulating and implementing the country's educational policy to ensure equality.

### **Bishop slams 'intolerant policies' in Indonesia's Maluku**

(14-9-22) Bishop Seno Inno Ngutra of Amboina Diocese has accused a top district official in Indonesia's Maluku province of not supporting religious groups' effort to promote tolerance in the region that has witnessed deadly sectarian conflicts.

The bishop, on behalf of religious leaders in the province, will sign off a "no-confidence motion" against Brigadier General Andi Chandra As'aduddin, the acting head of West Seram district. Addressing a press conference at his office on Sept. 13, Bishop Ngutra (51) alleged that the military officer "has tarnished inter-religious tolerance with his inhumane policies and actions." "We will write a letter of rejection against him to the Minister of Home Affairs" and send its copies to the President and the Minister of State Secretary, the bishop said. Since taking office in May, As'aduddin has carried out a number of policies that have sparked uproar from religious leaders, he alleged. The violence killed more than 6,000 people and displaced tens of thousands, forcing the government to deploy the military to restore order. The bishop particularly criticized As'aduddin for his questioning the legitimacy of the Catholic Ecclesiastical Choir Festival (Pesparani), part of a national program under the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

### **Myanmar junta desecrates another Catholic church**

(14-9-22) A Catholic church has been desecrated by junta soldiers who used it as a kitchen and laid mines around the building, according to Church sources.

Myanmar's military has continued to target churches and Christian institutions in the conflict-stricken country where the religious minority bears the brunt of the conflict triggered by the February 2021 coup.

The junta's act came after occupying the Mother of God Church in Moby town, southern Shan state for several days

before retreating from the church this week following casualties in fierce fighting with local defense forces. Moby, where the majority of people are Catholic, belongs to Pekhonn diocese.

Dirty floors and pews covered with dust along with cooking pots and military uniforms were seen inside the church according to a video posted by local defense forces which went viral on social media. Parishioners were urged not to go near the church building as the army had laid mines near it.



15-9-22

### **Pope lauds 'decisive' rejection of extremism and terror in inter-faith declaration**

(15-9-22) In his final public address before leaving Kazakhstan on September 15, Pope Francis underlined the importance of inter-faith cooperation, praising the document issued by the Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, which he had attended.

The inter-faith declaration, the Pope remarked, "states that extremism, radicalism, terrorism and all other incentives to hatred, hostility, violence and war, whatever their motivations or goals, have nothing to do with the authentic spirit of religion and must be rejected in the most decisive terms possible."

The Pontiff went on to say that religious leaders must unite in the cause of peace, which "grows through the struggle against injustice and inequality." In a plea for an end to religious intolerance and persecution, he added that "those who legitimately desire to voice their beliefs must be protected, always and everywhere."

### **Interfaith statement affirms tolerance and pluralism**



(15-9-22) A statement issued by the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions, meeting in Kazakhstan this week, condemned intolerance, extremism, persecution, terrorism, all forms of coercion in the name of religion. The statement referred with approval to the Document on Human Fraternity signed by Pope Francis and Sheikh Ahmad al-Tayyeb, which had also declared that religious differences reflect God's will.

The lengthy (35 paragraph) statement, issued at the conclusion of the conference in which Pope Francis participated, also proclaimed that pluralism in religious belief is one of the "expressions of the wisdom of God's will in creation."

The statement called upon all religious leaders to support the causes of the poor and migrants, and to commit themselves to the battle against climate change.

The statement was signed by "a majority" of nearly 100 delegates, from 60 different countries, who had joined in the meeting.

### **'How many must die?': Pope blasts war, appeals for peace**

(15-9-22) Without mentioning Russia by name, Pope Francis has issued appeals for peace throughout his apostolic journey to Kazakhstan.

"How many deaths will it still take before conflict yields to dialogue for the good of people, nations and all humanity?" he preached during Mass. "The one solution is peace and the only way to arrive at peace is through dialogue."



### **Faith is not 'a fixed and timeless code,' Pope tells Kazakh clergy**

(15-9-22) Speaking to Catholic priests, religious, and church workers in Kazakhstan on September 15, Pope Francis reminded them that "in the Church, no one is a stranger."

Recognizing that many of the pastoral workers in Kazakhstan today are from other countries, the Pope encouraged them to put the history of the Church and the work of evangelization in proper perspective.

He told them that "the faith was not passed down from generation to generation as a set of ideas to be understood and followed, as a fixed and timeless code."

Instead of being "bogged down in the same old way of doing things," the Pope said, evangelists should form a "community open to God's future."

### **Stop Azerbaijan's aggression, Armenian church leader pleads**

(15-9-22) Amid renewed fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the head of the Armenian Apostolic Church issued an "appeal to the international community, and especially to our friendly countries, to take effective steps to stop Azerbaijan's repeated aggression and ambitions towards the Armenian world."

### **Patriarch Kirill: attempts to build world order without relying on moral values led to fierce confrontation**

(15-9-22) Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, sent a message to the 7th Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions in Kazakhstan. Kirill was originally scheduled to attend the conference in person, but then changed his plans.

### **Feminist leader admits 'we inflated the figures' to get abortion legalized in Mexico**

(15-9-22) "At that time, I remember, we women said, '100,000 women die from clandestine abortions,'" said Marta Lamas, one of the founders of the Group for Information on Elective Reproduction. "It turns out that 100,000 people died in the whole country, men and women from all diseases. We inflated the figures."

### **In Pakistan, elderly Christian man subjected to slave labour and murdered**



(15-9-22) According to the report, a Muslim police officer forced Boota Masih to work on his cattle farm in order to repay his son's debts. Masih was subsequently killed.

### **Ukrainian Catholic leader laments war's ecological destruction**

(15-9-22) "When we look today at what the enemy leaves behind – burned and destroyed cities and villages, burnt fields of wheat, plundered forests, mined chernozems, polluted ponds, rivers, and water sources from which you can no longer drink – we see that war is not only a crime against human life, but also a crime against God's creation," said Major Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.

The archbishop made his remarks as his church prepared to celebrate the Day of God the Creator on September 14.

### **Sierra Leone - New catastrophic floods: preserve the environment and avoid irresponsible waste**

(15-9-22) The heavy floods that hit the country do not seem to have any respite. After the rains recorded several times in August 2022, there are new losses caused by the disastrous torrential rains of September 10 in the western region of Sierra Leone.

"We continue to appeal to all to preserve the environment, plant trees and stop irresponsibly littering. Otherwise, we will continue to suffer the dangers relentlessly", said Fr. Peter Konteh, Executive Director of Caritas Freetown, assessing damage to Kiera Chaplin Desert Flower School, a charity run by Caritas Freetown to help girls from vulnerable families, among others. "The school is located at the foot of a hill from which rocks fell which destroyed pipes and infrastructure", he said, "the litter preventing water from flowing freely."

### **Central Africa - Cardinal Nzapalainga appeals to 'preserve peace at all costs' as constitutional review process underway**

(15-8-22) "If I have a particular message, it is to preserve peace at all costs. When we have not experienced war, we do not appreciate the importance of preserving peace. But when we experienced the war, that we slept on the grass, that we drank dirty water and that we had nothing to eat, that we could not go to school, that we were not able to get treatment and that we were afraid of dying like animals, all this leads us to say: it is time to preserve peace", declared Cardinal Dieudonné Nzapalainga, Archbishop of Bangui, referring to the start of the process of revision of the Constitution initiated by President Faustin-Archange Touadéra. But he wanted the people to be consulted first.



### **Singapore - The "Sister Churches" for the Gospel of dialogue, peace and solidarity in Asia**

(15-9-22) "The Catholic Church in Singapore and the 'sister Churches' of Malaysia and Brunei are witnesses and heralds of the Gospel of dialogue and peace, of a message of love and closeness to every person in Asia", says Cardinal William Goh, Archbishop of Singapore, recalling, on the eve of the assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (October, 12-30). The Catholic Church in the continent - he observes - is called to promote religious unity and harmony, as also underlined by Pope Francis, present in Central Asia in these days, for his apostolic journey to Kazakhstan (September, 13-15).

"Singapore is today an icon of religious harmony in the world: here religious leaders and the government work side by side for the good of society. We are committed to spreading peace and unity in Singapore as in the rest of Asia, promoting dialogue among the different religions. As followers of Christ, we are all called to work for the common good of society and of all humanity", said the Cardinal, who returned to Singapore after being made a cardinal on Aug. 27 by the Pope.

### **Kazakhstan - Pope Francis to Catholics: there is a hidden grace in being a "little flock"**

(15-9-22) In the Church "no one is a stranger", because the mystery of God has been revealed for "all peoples", and "not merely to the chosen people, or to a religious elite". Faith, and the salvation promised by Christ, are not passed down from generation to generation "as a set of ideas to be understood and followed, as a fixed and timeless code". They are the gift that the Risen Christ can work today in the life of those who follow him. And those who can most easily notice and enjoy it are the little ones, the poor in spirit, because "littleness humbly hands us over to the power of God, who teaches us not to base our ecclesial activity on our own abilities". Thus spoke Pope Francis to the small Catholic community of Kazakhstan, also reminding them that "there is a hidden grace in being a small Church, a small flock". He did so on the third and last day of his Apostolic Journey to Kazakhstan, meeting in the Catholic Cathedral of Nur-Sultan Bishops, priests, consecrated persons, seminarians and pastoral workers, mostly from distant countries.

Even in Kazakhstan, a multicultural and multireligious country, the lively presence of Christian communities is linked to the rich history that preceded it, and which draws on the spread of the proclamation of the Gospel in Central Asia which began in the first centuries of Christianity. Many evangelizers and missionaries recalled the Pope - spent their lives spreading the light of the Gospel, founding communities, shrines, monasteries and places of worship. A legacy that must be honored and preserved. The memory of the past "does not make us close in on ourselves; it opens us up to the promise of the Gospel. Jesus assured us that he would remain with us always, so his is not merely a promise about the future. We are called today to embrace the renewal that the risen Jesus is bringing about in our lives". Christians and all those involved in the apostolic work of the Church are called to confess and bear witness to the actual work of Christ himself, "to bear witness to the very heart of salvation, to the newness of Jesus, to the newness that is Jesus".

Concluding his speech, the Bishop of Rome asked the small Kazakh Catholic community not to "be a group bogged down in the same old way of doing things, or withdrawn into its shell since it feels small, but a community open to God's future, afire with his Spirit. A community that is alive, filled with hope, open to the newness of the Spirit and to the signs of the times, inspired by the Gospel's example of the little seed that grows and bears fruit in humble and creative love". The Pope also asked to make room for the laity, so that "our communities do not become rigid or clerical". The Pontiff also exhorted Bishops and priests "not to be administrators of the sacred or enforcers of religious rules, but pastors close to our people."

### **Brazil - Towards the elections of October 2: the bishops meet the candidates**

(15-9-22) General elections will be held in Brazil on Sunday, October 2 to elect the President and Vice-President of the Republic, to renew the Chamber and the Senate and to elect the 27 state governors. If none of the presidential candidates obtains 50% of the votes, a second round will be organized on October 30.

The elections are taking place in a divided country that is experiencing a serious economic and social crisis, with all its consequences, aggravated by the pandemic and its mismanagement. In the message issued at the end of their 59th General Assembly, defining the social framework as "very serious" and the need for "urgent changes", the Brazilian Bishops invited "to participate in the elections and to vote with conscience and responsibility", choosing the projects of the candidates committed to the integral defense of life, in all its stages, without forgetting human and social rights

and our common home. "All Christians are called to worry about building a better world, through dialogue and the culture of encounter, in the struggle for justice and peace." The National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) has begun its agenda of meetings with the candidates for the elections.

### **Vietnam priests urged to renew their lives to serve better**

(15-9-22) Priests from Vietnam's northern dioceses have been asked to return to God and themselves at their regular training course.



More than 800 priests from Hanoi archdiocese and 10 northern dioceses attended a training course on Sept. 12-14 at Sam Son Church in Thanh Hoa province.

Present at the course with the theme: Towards a Synodal Church: Communion — Participation — and Mission were Archbishop Joseph Vu Van Thien of Hanoi and eight bishops.

Archbishop Thien, who presided at the opening Mass, said the training course was a good opportunity for all priests from Hanoi ecclesiastical province to meet and interact with one another and share their pastoral experiences and difficult challenges in their lives. He said they will study Church teachings related to ministries and celebration of Mass and other rites, and practices in their daily life. Noting that priests must live out the faith, teach the faith to others and celebrate the faith, he urged them to contemplate and strengthen their faith to return to God and themselves.

Bishop Thomas Vu Dinh Hieu of Bui Chu called on priests to fight against the terrible and inexcusable crime of sexual abuse and trust in God's love and love the Church as a way to overcome the crisis and challenges in their lives.

Participants studied regulations on matrimony ministry and challenges in dealing with religious problems from migrant couples and mixed marriages, on Mass stipends, and how to use money. They openly discussed difficulties in their lives and effective ways to cope with them.

Hundreds more priests were expected to join the same three-day course on Sept. 15-17.

### **Filipinos hail moratorium on farmers' debt payments**

(15-9-22) Filipino Catholic groups and farmers have welcomed a one-year moratorium on land amortization and interest payments for thousands of farmers to their landlords for farmland distributed under the country's agrarian reform program.

President Ferdinand Marcos, Jr. signed an executive order to impose the moratorium on Sept. 12.

The freezing of payments was expected to assist farmers in focusing on their productivity to increase their yield cushioning the effects of the pandemic.

### **Malaysia confirms pledge to end death penalty**

(15-9-22) Malaysia will abolish the mandatory death penalty and replace it with other types of punishment for several offences, Minister of Law, Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said. The minister also announced a moratorium for 1,337 death-convict inmates in Malaysia.

### **Timor-Leste prez underlines importance of 'human fraternity'**

(15-9-22) Timor-Leste President the importance of the papal building a prosperous country extreme poverty.

In his 100-day term address to president declared the Fraternity for World Peace and state's official document.



Jose Ramos-Horta has underlined document on human fraternity in amid serious challenges, including

parliament on Sept. 15, the resolution in May to ratify the Human Living Together document as the

He said that the document, which was signed by Pope Francis and Grand Iman of Al-Azhar Ahmad Muhammad Al-Tayyeb in 2019, seeks to further promote a "culture of mutual respect between religions and communities across the world."

The resolution "reaffirms equality, recognizes the right to education, to work and to the exercise of political rights," he added. "It recognizes religious plurality and freedom of belief, thought, expression and action as pillars of democracy. It recognizes the common challenges facing humanity, such as peace, hunger, misery, climate change and public health."

16-9-22

### **Pope, in press conference, says sending weapons to Ukraine can be morally acceptable**

(16-9-22) As Pope Francis returned to Rome from his apostolic journey to Kazakhstan, he held his customary in-flight press conference and touched upon Ukraine, China, Europe's demographic winter, and the Church in Germany.

The Pope said that sending weapons to Ukraine "can be moral – morally acceptable – if it is done according to the conditions of morality. But it can be immoral if it is done with the intention of provoking more war or selling weapons or discarding those weapons that are no longer needed. The motivation is what largely qualifies the morality of this act. To defend oneself is not only lawful but also an expression of love of country."

Asked about relations with China, he said that "there is a dialogue commission that is going well, chaired by Cardinal Parolin, and he is the person right now who knows the most about China ... It is a slow process, but steps forward are always being made."



Asked whether the upcoming trial of Cardinal Zen is a violation of religious freedom, the Pope said that "qualifying China as undemocratic, I do not identify with that, because it's such a complex country. Yes, it is true that there are things that seem undemocratic to us, that is true. Cardinal Zen is going to trial these days, I think. And he says what he feels, and you can see that there are limitations there."

The Pope also said that European nations, in light of their demographic winter, are foolish not to accept migrants. Asked to comment on the loss of believers in Germany, the Pope said that "when a Church, whatever it is, in some country or in

some sector, thinks more about money, development, pastoral plans and not pastoral care, and you go that way, that doesn't attract people."

### **Vatican 'foreign minister' to attend Queen Elizabeth's funeral**

(16-9-22) Archbishop Paul Gallagher, the Secretary for Relations with States, will attend the funeral of Queen Elizabeth I on September 19, the Vatican has announced.

### **Vatican sought Xi-Pope meeting in Kazakhstan, China declined—source**

(16-9-22) A Vatican source told Reuters that Chinese officials declined a Vatican overture for a meeting between Pope Francis and President Xi Jinping, who were in Kazakhstan at the same time. "The Chinese side said they 'appreciated the gesture' but that there was no free time on Xi's schedule," according to the report. This is the second time that the two leaders, though in the same city at the same time, did not meet.

### **European Parliament condemns anti-Catholic repression in Nicaragua**

(16-9-22) In a 538-16 vote, the European Parliament passed a resolution that "condemns in the strongest possible terms the escalating repression against the Catholic Church, opposition figures, civil society, human rights defenders, journalists, peasants, students and indigenous people in Nicaragua."

The members pointed "in particular to the arbitrary arrest of Bishop Rolando Álvarez, and call for his and others' immediate and unconditional release and the annulment of all legal proceedings against them."

### **Comboni: Sexual abuse victims welcome apology from missionaries**

(16-9-22) On June 13, Pope Francis met for 90 minutes with eight British and Irish men who were victims of abuse in a junior seminary in England in the 1960s and 1970s. The seminary, now closed, was run by the Comboni Missionaries.

A September 13 meeting between the abuse survivors and Comboni Missionaries "was much more

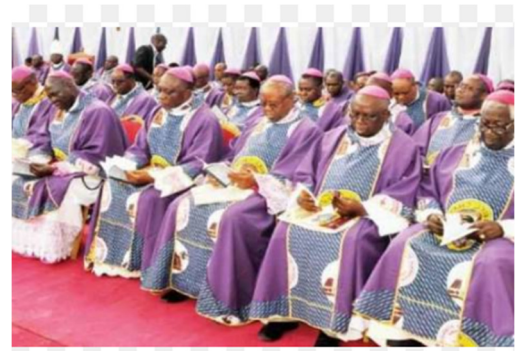


positive than I had imagined it was going to be," said one of the victims. "They begged for our forgiveness; I didn't expect it to be as heartfelt as it was."

16-9-22

### **Nigeria - "Insecurity and economic mismanagement threaten the nation"**

(16-9-22) "The frequent attacks on travelers in the streets and on the faithful in churches and other places of worship have not yet received an adequate response from the authorities". This is the umpteenth denunciation of the bishops of Nigeria on the security situation of the most populous African country (about 200 million inhabitants), contained in the final communiqué published at the end of the Second Plenary Assembly of the Nigerian Bishops' Conference.



"As we continue to call on civil authorities to uphold their constitutional responsibility to protect the lives and property of Nigerians, we call on everyone to strengthen security measures in their homes and institutions. We call on all citizens to be law-abiding, vigilant and to avoid all forms of violence and crime".

On the economic level, the Bishops' Conference notes that "Rampant inflation, high cost of goods and services, rising unemployment, theft of crude oil and non-functioning refineries have inflicted untold hardships on the citizens. In addition, governments have resorted to unnecessary loans, jeopardizing the well-being of current and future generations."

"The poor state of our economy has led to the massive migration of our human capital, especially professional and skilled workers, who are fleeing the nation in search of job opportunities".

"The Church does not support any political party but the Church is not indifferent or neutral to the formation and activities of the political community", recalling the responsibility of all to the search and pursuit of the common good. They made an appeal to Catholic lay faithful to engage in political activity in pursuance of the common good".

### **Guatemala - Independence Day: "the gift of freedom is in danger when God's name is mixed up with group interests"**

(16-9-22) "The gift of freedom is in danger when, in the already accelerated political competition, the name of God mixes with group interests, to obtain power to serve oneself and not to serve the citizens: all this ends in the same framework of corruption and impunity". It is an invitation "to prayer and reflection on the life of the Church and society" in this month of September, month of the Fatherland and the Bible, launched by Bishop Victor Hugo Palma Paul of Escuintla.

### **Christians wary as Indian state outlaws conversion**

(16-9-22) Archbishop Peter Machado of Bangalore had a guarded response a day after Karnataka's legislative council in India's south gave its final seal of approval on September 15 to a law criminalizing religious conversions.

The anti-conversion law was already in force after the pro-Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which rules the state, promulgated an ordinance on May 17 with the signature of the state governor.

The opposition Congress and Janata Dal (People's Front) parties, however, called the move "unconstitutional."

When contacted by UCA News on Sept. 16, Bishop Machado said he had already challenged the ordinance in the state's high court and refused to make further comments on the new law. The prelate said he would disclose his position before the court rather than make it public through the media.

Archbishop Machado, who heads the regional bishops' forum, has been one of the fiercest critics of anti-conversion laws in the country.

17-9-22

### **Poland - Father Bovio warns of the onset of winter in Ukraine: “Requests for help are increasing”**

(17-9-22) In anticipation of the coming winter, Father Luca Bovio IMC, Superior of the Comboni Missionaries living in Poland, is providing the people of Ukraine with food, wooden panels to lock the broken windows, school bags for children trying to continue to live a normal life despite the ongoing conflict. These are some of the concrete aid to the Ukrainian population. The Italian missionary, who came to Poland 14 years ago, has also been national secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Union there for 10 years and reports to Fides on the current situation in the neighboring country.

"While the summer temperatures have made living conditions somewhat tolerable, the approaching autumn and especially the prospect of winter complicates what is already a very difficult situation," says the religious, who has been to Ukraine several times and in November will return there. "In the past few weeks," says Father Bovio, "we have been active in various aid projects. The requests for help are increasing, while the conflict continues unabated".

### **Cambodia - Three new Cambodian deacons for pastoral service**

(17-9-22) "To give yourself all to God. Give all yourself to others. This is the vocation of the deacon", said Bishop Olivier Schmitthaeusler, Vicar Apostolic of Phnom Penh, expressing "great joy for the whole Church in Cambodia" because "after long years of discernment, formation, prayer of families and of the whole community, we are reaping wonderful fruits: three Cambodian deacons receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders. This is a great grace for our little Church and, God willing, next year our priests".

The three new deacons will serve in a local church with 10 Cambodian priests in a church that, after the dark days of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979), thanks to the presence of missionaries, the faith and Catholic communities in the region have flourished again. There are about 20,000 Catholics out of a population of 15 million.

18-9-22

### **Pope at Angelus: Be creative and clever in doing good always**

(18-9-22) Speaking to pilgrims gathered in Saint Peter's Square for the Sunday Angelus, Pope Francis offered his weekly reflections on the Sunday Gospel, which recounts the parable Jesus told about the corrupt manager who squandered his master's property, but was discovered and set to be fired. The manager quickly and shrewdly found a way out of the situation to save himself.

The dishonest steward, when caught, the Pope explained, does not resign himself to his fate or play the victim, but on the contrary, acts with shrewdness in finding a way out of his bind. The Pope noted Jesus' words, "The children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light," who sometimes are not as alert or are too naive, not knowing how to take the initiative to find ways out of difficulties. Cleverness and creativity can be used for good, he pointed out, noting that Jesus shows that in following the Gospel, we need to be honest, awake, and attentive to discern reality and be creative to find ways to win for us security. The Pope explained further that we are called to inherit eternal life – serve the one master worth the name, and therefore "there is no need to accumulate goods in this world"

After the Angelus, Pope Francis prayed for the victims of recent fighting between Azerbaijan and Armenia, appealing for dialogue and peace. He also asked everyone to continue praying for Ukraine and all parts of the world bloodied by war.



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